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From the Shadows of Mt. Moriah: Approaching Faith in Fear and Trembling

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Abstract: Johannes de Silentio, the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*, purports to be an individual who admires faith but cannot attain to its unearthly standards. The discontinuity between Kierkegaard, who self-identified as a religious author, and de Silentio, who approaches Abraham in self-doubt, is apparent—and as a result, some have argued for an utter dissociation between these two authors. I argue that such dissociation undermines the potency of the work, especially with regard to the perspective on faith presented therein. The significance of de Silentio's perspective becomes clear when set against the backdrop of Kierkegaard's view of the relationship between anxiety and faith; in this light, de Silentio turns out to represent an early stage of the individual's religious development, and Kierkegaard turns out to have recently surpassed this stage before writing the work.

Keywords: anxiety, faith, *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de Silentio, Søren Kierkegaard

"There were countless generations that knew the story of Abraham by heart,
word for word. How many did it make sleepless?" (Kierkegaard 1983, 28)

Introduction

The informed reader of *Fear and Trembling* will recognize Kierkegaard's intention that his pseudonymous authors be read and quoted as individualized personages, not as pennames used to maintain anonymity. The words of Johannes de Silentio, the author of *Fear and Trembling*, are to be taken as "individualized lines of a poetically actualized thinker;" thus Kierkegaard distances himself from de Silentio, refusing to claim the views presented in the work as his own (Kierkegaard 2009, 538). Furthermore, de Silentio reveals throughout that he does not have faith, thereby widening the divide that separates ultimate author from pseudonymous author. C. Stephen Evans (2006) drives this dissociation to its utmost conclusion: he argues that de Silentio and Kierkegaard are "most emphatically distinct," leading us to conclude that the views presented by de Silentio do not in any way reflect Kierkegaard's own views.

My concern is that such dissociation weakens the intended message of the text, specifically with regard to the view of faith presented therein. De Silentio claims not to have faith, and yet *Fear and Trembling* is very clearly a book about one thing: faith. How is the reader to identify with de Silentio's perspective if she thinks that he presents a view that may be contrary to Kierkegaard's own? Does Kierkegaard endorse de Silentio's view as anything more than a heuristic device? In what follows, I aim to add to the discussion on faith in *Fear and Trembling* by identifying Johannes de Silentio with an early stage in Kierkegaard's overall conception of the individual's religious development. In doing so I hope to elucidate the relationship between Kierkegaard's mature view of faith and the depiction of faith he presents in *Fear and Trembling*.

To set a backdrop against which we can evaluate the perspective on faith presented in the text, I begin by elaborating upon Kierkegaard's overt and covert purposes in writing. Next, I outline and address three arguments that Evans presents in favor of his conclusion that Kierkegaard and de Silentio are utterly distinct. To juxtapose Kierkegaard's perspective on faith with de Silentio's perspective, I then analyze and interpret the concepts of the knight of faith, the knight of infinite resignation, and the relation between faith and absurdity as they apply to de Silentio himself. These issues constitute a point of departure, from which I will present and analyze Kierkegaard's view of the relationship between anxiety and faith; the core of my argument is that the perspective on faith presented in *Fear and Trembling* should be interpreted according to this framework, which allows us to understand de Silentio as an individual in the beginning stages of a journey unto faith.

Kierkegaard's overt and covert purposes in writing

The overt purpose of *Fear and Trembling* is to highlight the difficult nature of faith over against the notion that faith is something easy or simplistic.[1] De Silentio addresses the accepted view of faith in his culture: "Today nobody will stop with faith; they all go further [...] In those old days it was different. For then faith was a task for a whole lifetime, not a skill thought to be acquired in either days or weeks" (Kierkegaard 1986, 42). More precisely, de Silentio's overt purpose in writing is to subvert the belief that "having faith" is identical to "merely adhering to" the ethical standard of society, and is thereby easily obtained.

It is no secret that *Fear and Trembling* contains a covert message that is intended for one reader in particular, Regine Olsen. The epigraph, "What Tarquinius Superbus said in the garden by means of the poppies, the son understood but the messenger did not," is not explained by either author of the text; nevertheless, many interpreters agree that Tarquin corresponds to Kierkegaard and that the son corresponds to Regine, Kierkegaard's former fiancée (Kierkegaard 1986, 3; Green 1986, 95). The oblivious messenger is often interpreted to refer to the general reader, but it has also been argued that the messenger refers to the pseudonymous author of the text, Johannes de Silentio. Ronald Green has maintained that the reader plays the role of the ignorant intermediary: "On the basis of this epigraph, it is easy to conclude that the reader of Fear and Trembling is in the position of the envoy: recipient of a message not meant for him and one whose deepest meaning escapes him. But if this is so, what is this message and to whom is it directed?" (1986, 95). Green postulates that Kierkegaard intended his message for Regina, with whom he had broken his engagement, and for another secret reader, therefore placing the reader into the intermediary position between

[1] I intend "overt purpose" to refer to the purpose that Johannes de Silentio expresses in his introduction, which he references throughout the text.

Kierkegaard and the recipients of his covert message.[2] C. Stephen Evans (2006), by contrast, maintains that the oblivious messenger is actually Johannes de Silentio:

> Fear and Trembling is a book about faith. It is therefore notable that its pseudonymous author, Johannes de Silentio, on numerous occasions confesses that he is not a person of faith, and affirms that he does not understand faith. Perhaps his 'silence' is a way of stressing that because he lacks faith and lacks an insider's understanding of faith, he necessarily fails to communicate what faith is. … It seems to me quite plausible that Johannes de Silentio is himself the messenger of the book, and that he communicates something that he himself does not really understand. (63)

Evans's position provides a plausible explanation of de Silentio's silence: he expresses his inability to understand Abraham's faith throughout the book, and as the book's pseudonymous author, he is very literally a messenger between Kierkegaard and his reader—whether Regina, the recipient of the covert message, or the general reader, the recipient of the overt message.

From this foundation, however, Evans moves to utterly dissociate Kierkegaard and de Silentio. "*Fear and Trembling* is a pseudonymous work," he contends, "And its pseudonymous author, Johannes de Silentio, is most emphatically distinct from Kierkegaard" (Evans 2006, 63). I wish to qualify this dissociation, for one reason in particular: based on this dissociation, the informed reader is apt to conclude that de Silentio's perspective on faith is utterly distinct from Kierkegaard's own view—and thus that the view presented in the work is not as important, Christianly speaking, as it initially appears to be. Again, if de Silentio assumes a perspective that in no way reflects Kierkegaard's own view, and if de Silentio is one who "Lacks faith, and who lacks an insider's understanding of faith," why should readers take him seriously? My intention is to supplement Evans's overarching argument, that "*Fear and Trembling* is not the book on which to focus if one wants to understand Kierkegaard's own views on ethics," by addressing and qualifying his argument that de Silentio is "most emphatically distinct from Kierkegaard" (2006, 62, 63). To do so, I will respond to the three arguments he gives to support this dissociation, using the last as a springboard to discuss the concepts that de Silentio uses to describe the faith of Abraham. Evans's arguments are as follows:

> 1. De Silentio affirms throughout that although he admires faith, he does not understand it. In his non-pseudonymous works, however, Kierkegaard chastises "admiration" because it tends to become an excuse used to evade religious responsibilities.
>
> 2. Although Kierkegaard sometimes references the autobiographical aspect of *Fear and Trembling* in his *Journals and Papers*, he is careful to attribute the views presented in the work to Johannes de Silentio, not to claim them as his own.
>
> 3. The major concepts and strategies employed in *Fear and Trembling* do not appear in Kierkegaard's later works, particularly in his non-pseudonymous works.

[2] Green argues that this second secret reader is Michael Pederson Kierkegaard, father of Søren Kierkegaard.

Response to Evans's three arguments

From Kierkegaard's negative view of admiration we infer that he did not favor de Silentio's disposition. Faith is more desirable than mere admiration of faith, and Kierkegaard certainly intended to lead his readers toward fullness of faith and not mere admiration of it.[3] Evans grounds this first argument in *Works of Love* and *Practice in Christianity*, both published during the period known as Kierkegaard's second authorship. This period marks a transition from his method of indirect communication to a more direct communication.[4] It is around this same time that Kierkegaard discloses his own view of the relationship between anxiety and faith, and I will argue that we should interpret de Silentio's lack of faith according to this reflection.

Evans's second argument, that Kierkegaard is careful to distance his own mature views from those of de Silentio, is best understood in light of Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication. At the end of the first authorship period he published "A First and Last Declaration," in which he admitted to being the ultimate author of the various pseudonymous works. It is here that Kierkegaard separates himself most vehemently from the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*: "In *Fear and Trembling* I am as little *Johannes de Silentio* as I am the knight of faith that he depicts, exactly as little; and again, just as little the author of the preface to the book, which are the individualized lines of a poetically actualized thinker" (2009, 528). Kierkegaard's primary purpose in utilizing this method of indirect communication, as it relates to the overt purpose of *Fear and Trembling*, is to draw his reader into de Silentio's perspective, inviting her to wrestle with the dilemmas raised by de Silentio.[5] Edward F. Mooney (1991) explains that when this method is successful, it "Corrects and transforms by insuring that one becomes fully identified—intellectually and emotionally—with the perspective that is developed. Then, when inevitable instabilities emerge, the underlying critique is experienced as self-critique, rather than as presumptuous judgmental attack" (6). It is with regard to this point that I believe Evans's dissociation to be least useful.

Annie Dillard (1974) describes the way in which self-awareness shatters moments of beauty: "So long as I lose myself in a tree, say, I can scent its leafy breath or estimate its board feet of lumber, I can draw its fruits or boil tea on its branches, and the tree stays tree. But the second I become aware of myself at any of these activities ... the tree vanishes, uprooted from the spot and flung out of sight as if it had never grown" (82).[6] One moment, I am transfixed by beauty that appears only in immediacy—but as soon as I think to myself, "I wish this moment would last," or "I can't believe that I am experiencing this," the moment and its beauty vanish into eternity. In like manner, knowledge of Evans's utter dissociation may only serve to end the reader's immediate association with Johannes de Silentio. As soon as the reader thinks, "but de Silentio is *most emphatically*

[3] This point will become clearer toward the end of my argument.

[4] Kierkegaard published *Works of Love* under his own name in 1847, and he published *Practice in Christianity* under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus in 1850. As the term "direct authorship" implies, Kierkegaard communicates in a more direct manner during his second authorship. The ideas presented in these works are more reliably attributed to Kierkegaard himself.

[5] For more on Kierkegaard's intentions with regard to the first period of his authorship, see section III of Edward F. Mooney, "Pseudonyms and Style" (2013).

[6] Dillard suspects that these moments of beauty provide glimpses into eternity, and I am convinced that Kierkegaard does as well. See especially the story recounted in Vanessa Rumble, "Eternity Lies Beneath: Autonomy and Finitude in Kierkegaard's Early Writings." (1997).

distinct from Kierkegaard, and he is most certainly not a Christian," her intellectual and emotional identification with the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling* vanishes, and her trust in him is lost. Thus the reader awakens from the immediacy of identification, and the intended self-critique returns to a "presumptuous judgmental attack" on de Silentio's articulated deliberations. The method of indirect communication is hindered, therefore, when pseudonymous author and ultimate author are so decidedly torn asunder.

The conceptual and rhetorical divergence from Kierkegaard's later works that Evans notes in his second argument can also be explained by appealing to the differences between Kierkegaard's first period of authorship and second period of authorship. It is not surprising that "The major concepts and strategies employed in *Fear and Trembling* do not for the most part reappear in other writings of Kierkegaard, particularly in the non-pseudonymous works," or that "the imaginative figures of the 'knight of faith' and the 'knight of infinite resignation' play no role when Kierkegaard articulates faith in his own voice" (Evans 2006, 65-66). Whereas the purpose of Kierkegaard's indirect, pseudonymous authorship is to help his reader to wrestle with the various dilemmas posed by the various individualized thinkers, the purpose of Kierkegaard's direct, non-pseudonymous authorship is to *unambiguously* lead his reader into a deeper understanding of the Christian faith.[7] With this distinction in mind, we should not expect Kierkegaard to invoke the concepts of the knight of faith, the knight of infinite resignation, or the absurdity of faith in his non-pseudonymous writings. These concepts are the poetic expressions of an individual struggling to understand Abraham—the imaginative constructions of an 'outsider,' who claims that he does not have faith—utilized by Kierkegaard to lead his reader into recognition of the difficult and subjective nature of faith. When Kierkegaard articulates faith in his own voice, he speaks *directly*, not indirectly, to his reader.

The knight of faith, the knight of infinite resignation, and the relation between faith and absurdity

Having discussed a few problems that such dissociation presents to the method of indirect communication, and having addressed the arguments that Evans provides to support this dissociation, we now transition to address the relationship between Kierkegaard and de Silentio. Before considering Kierkegaard's view of the relationship between anxiety and faith, we must first analyze the concepts that de Silentio uses to describe the movements that Abraham makes, and interpret them as they apply to de Silentio himself.

The *knight of infinite resignation* and the *knight of faith* are concepts that de Silentio employs to distinguish between the ethical stage of existence [and] the religious stage of existence.[8] The act of placing faith in God constitutes the "qualitative leap" that bridges the gap between the two spheres, and it is this leap that distinguishes the knight of faith from the knight of infinite resignation. The qualitative leap of faith propels the individual into an "absolute relation to the

[7] It is not clear which strategies Evans refers to when he states that the strategies employed in *Fear and Trembling* do not reappear in Kierkegaard's other writings. Evans does not dispute, however, that the ultimate strategy employed in the work is the strategy Kierkegaard employs in the majority of his pseudonymous works, namely, the strategy of indirect communication. I have adopted the idea that Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors articulate dilemmas, as explored by Daniel Watts (2011).

[8] Davenport (2008) notes that *Fear and Trembling* is about "The complex relation between the 'stages' of existence that [Kierkegaard] calls 'the ethical' and *the religious*" (196).

absolute," and it is by this relation that Abraham becomes a single individual before God, capable of receiving a command meant only for him. From a societal-ethical vantage point, Abraham's compliance makes him a murderer. For this reason, he is unable to speak of his trial—to do so would be to universalize the command to sacrifice a son to God.[9] From a religious vantage point, however, Abraham's obedience makes him a man of faith. Johannes de Silentio writes as one who has not yet entered into a God-relation via the qualitative leap of faith; he finds himself at the precipice of the societal-ethical, wrestling with the apparent contradiction between God's command to Abraham and Abraham's ethical duty to care for his son. It is on the basis of this contradiction that de Silentio describes the qualitative leap of faith as a movement made on the strength of the absurd.

We find in the "Preliminary Expectoration" that the story of Abraham has personal significance for de Silentio: he has also received a command from God. To illustrate the relationship between the movement of faith and the movement of infinite resignation, he provides an anecdote from his own experience: the story of the knight and the princess. It is within this general context that he reveals his own failure to complete the qualitative leap of faith: "The dialectic of faith is the finest and the most extraordinary of all; it has an elevation of which I can certainly form a conception, but no more than that. I can make the mighty trampoline leap whereby I cross over into infinity" (Kierkegaard 1986, 36). The movement of infinity, or infinite resignation, is performed by the strength of the individual, and Abraham makes this movement by renouncing his desire to save his son from death. In like manner, de Silentio was able to resign his princess by renouncing his relationship to her. He explains that he made the movement of resignation and gained an eternal consciousness—a greater love for God—but he failed to complete the second movement:

> The act of resignation does not require faith, for what I gain in resignation is my eternal consciousness. This is a purely philosophical movement that I venture to make when it is demanded and can discipline myself to make... I starve myself into submission until I make the movement, for my eternal consciousness is my love for God, and for me that is the highest of all [...] By faith I do not renounce anything; on the contrary, by faith I receive everything exactly in the sense in which it is said that the one who has faith like a mustard seed can move mountains [...] It takes a paradoxical and humble courage to grasp the temporal realm now by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith. (Kierkegaard 1986, 48-49)

The movement of resignation is performed on the basis of human strength, and it is grounded in genuine love for God. The movement of faith, by contrast, is made on the strength of the absurd—the absurdity of the contradiction between the command and the socio-ethical standard, and the absurdity of receiving back the thing that has been renounced. Faith is an act of reception, and it is the only means by which Abraham can receive his son back joyfully. De Silentio applies this model to himself: "By my own strength I can give up the princess, and I will not sulk about it [...] but by my own strength I cannot get her back again, for I use all my strength in resigning. On the other hand, by faith, says that marvelous knight, by faith you will get her by the virtue of the absurd" (Kierkegaard 1986, 49-50). The knight of faith receives the princess back in temporality and he receives her back joyfully because of his unshakeable trust in God. De Silentio was not able

[9] For more on the idea that to speak of a divine command is to universalize it, see Santurri (1977).

to receive his princess back in temporality and is therefore a knight of infinite resignation, not a knight of faith.

Through the anecdote of the knight of resignation and the princess, we receive insight into the biography of the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*. We are able to see that the book comes from a man who has himself received a divine command and who is attempting to understand Abraham's response to God. This man is Johannes de Silentio. But this man is also Søren Kierkegaard in 1841. In an undated journal entry from that year, Kierkegaard reflects unreservedly on his decision to end his engagement to Regine: "My sin is that I did not have faith, faith that for God all things are possible, but where is the borderline between that and tempting God; but my sin has never been that I did not love her" (1978b, entry 5521).[10] Kierkegaard uses "faith" not with reference to the content of one's belief, but in the sense of placing one's trust in God. He performed the correct action in response to what he believed to be a divine command, but he did not perform the cognitive action that God required of him, namely, the action of trusting God.[11] Johannes de Silentio echoes the perspective of the Kierkegaard who attempted to obey God's command but had done so incorrectly: "The young girl's assurance is nothing but rashness compared with the unshakability of faith in the full recognition of the impossibility. Every time I want to make this movement [the movement of faith], I almost faint; the very same moment I admire absolutely, I am seized with great anxiety. For what is it to tempt God?" (Kierkegaard 1986, 48). Both de Silentio and Kierkegaard express the fear that an act of faith may turn out to be an act of tempting God, and both confess their lack of faith in response to a similar trial. In juxtaposing the expressed views of de Silentio and the Kierkegaard of 1841, we begin to see that the view of faith presented by de Silentio is a poetic portrayal of the younger Kierkegaard's inchoate view of faith—and we begin to recognize that de Silentio is a character in the beginning stages of a journey to faith.

The events in de Silentio's biography that cause him to ruminate upon the story of Abraham and Isaac are analogous to the events that caused Kierkegaard's crisis of faith and his subsequent maturation into a man of faith. In 1850, Kierkegaard articulated a view informed by his religious experience, which explains the process by which an individual's abstract love for God is molded into a subjective, concrete faith in him. He begins,

> the thought that God tests, yes, tempts a man must not horrify us. The way one looks upon it makes the crucial difference. Disbelief, melancholy, etc., immediately become anxious and afraid and really impute to God the intention of doing it *in order that* man shall fail. ...The believer, however, immediately interprets the matter inversely; he believes that God does it *in order that* he shall meet the test. Alas, in a certain sense this is why disbelief,

[10] As regards the Hongs' prefatory explanation of Kierkegaard's second "either/or" to Regine, that Kierkegaard presents Regine with two different interpretations of his behavior in *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*: I do not take there to be a contradiction between this view and my view that de Silentio is akin to the Kierkegaard of 1841 (Kierkegaard 1983, xvii). Kierkegaard was most certainly a man engaged in a struggle of faith and a man who deceived Regine as a means to "save" her and "give her soul resilience." She indefinitely became a sort of muse to him.

[11] For an indication that Kierkegaard believed that God was calling him to sacrifice his relationship with Regine, see Kirmmse (1996), 36-37. In this letter and the letters that surround it, Regine presents her perspective on the broken engagement.

> melancholy, anxiety, etc. so often fail in the test, because they enervate themselves in advance. (Kierkegaard 1978a, entry 1401)

The difference between inborn anxiety and conquering faith maps precisely to the difference between de Silentio and Abraham. The man of disbelief subconsciously views his spiritual trial as doomed from the start, while the man of faith acknowledges that he has been subjected to trial "in order that he shall meet the test." Nonetheless, the man of disbelief, like de Silentio, harbors a genuine love for God. Kierkegaard writes, "The person with inborn anxiety can very often have even a visionary idea of God's love. But he cannot concretize his relationship to God" (1978a, entry 1401).

Nonetheless, the man of disbelief is not rejected for failing the test. To the contrary, his anxiety indicates that he is approaching the precipice from which the qualitative leap of faith can be made.[12] Kierkegaard continues to explicate the anxiety-faith relation:

> But this is rigorous upbringing—this is going from inborn anxiety to faith. Anxiety is the most terrible kind of spiritual trial—before this point is reached where the same man is disciplined in faith, that is, to regard everything inversely, to remain full of hope and confidence when something happens which previously almost made him faint and expire with anxiety, to plunge fearlessly into something against which he previously knew only one means of safety, to flee, and so on. (Kierkegaard 1978a, entry 1401)

Anxiety about the test is itself a trial—and the *worst kind* of trial. 'Rigorous upbringing' is the process by which disbelief, anxiety and melancholy prod the man of disbelief to "plunge fearlessly" toward the religious sphere of existence. Kierkegaard concludes, "To hold fast this way to the thought that God is love just the same is the abstract form of faith, faith *in abstracto*. Then the time will come when he will succeed in concretizing his God-relationship" (1978a, entry 1401). Abstract faith lacks subjective content, failing to produce a subjective relation between God and the individual. Concrete faith, on the other hand, is an inward, subjective relation to God—in de Silentio's verbiage, concrete faith constitutes the "absolute relation to the absolute."[13] By these standards, de Silentio and the younger Kierkegaard both possess an abstract form of faith that has yet to be concretized, and both are therefore individuals approaching faith from the standpoint of anxiety.

In May of 1843, five months before the publication of *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard reflected again on his decision to end the engagement to Regina. He begins, "If I had had faith, I would have stayed with Regine. Thanks to God I now see that" (1978b, entry 5664). The younger Kierkegaard believed that he was attempting to obey a divine command to leave Regine, but the more mature Kierkegaard recognizes that he may have been called by God to stay with her. Marriage would only initiate her into dysfunction, however: "There are so many marriages which conceal little

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[12] For more on this idea, see Søren Kierkegaard (1981), T*he Concept of Anxiety: a Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation On the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin (Kierkegaard's Writings, VIII)*. Vigilius Haufniensis, the pseudonymous author of this text, uses "qualitative leap" to refer to the transition from the state of innocence to the state of sinfulness. I have applied this term to the transition from the ethical to the religious as delineated in *Fear and Trembling*. For Haufniensis's explication of the relation between anxiety and faith, see the final chapter of the work, "Anxiety as Saving Through Faith."

[13] Vigilius Haufniensis also employs the abstract-concrete distinction. See Kierkegaard 1981, 141.

stories. That I did not want, then she would have become my concubine; I would rather have murdered her" (1978b, entry 5664). Although Kierkegaard does not here disclose the content of his own "little stories," he does reveal their source: "It was, after all, *anxiety* that made me go astray" (1978b, entry 5664). The man of unbelief that Kierkegaard describes in the anxiety-faith relation, whose anxiety prevents him from placing faith in God, accurately describes both de Silentio and the Kierkegaard who struggled to make sense of his broken engagement. Thus de Silentio is an expression of Kierkegaard's former crisis of faith, created to draw the reader into dilemmas that expose the deeply personal nature of faith.

Against the backdrop of the individual's maturation from anxiety to faith, de Silentio's perspective becomes the perspective of a man who observes Abraham from the shadows of Moriah, struggling to understand the difficult—and even absurd—nature of his faith. In this light, Kierkegaard need not be utterly dissociated from de Silentio. With the understanding that Johannes de Silentio is a character whose anxiety has prevented him from attaining to faithfulness, but whose anxiety provides evidence that he is also in the beginning stages of a journey unto faith, the reader can confidently identify with de Silentio in the immediacy of association—free from anxiety about his relationship to the Kierkegaard who wrote directly at times, and indirectly at others.

Fear and Trembling is far from Kierkegaard's final word on the subject of faith; as the reader ascends the path that Kierkegaard has set before her, she will follow him out of the shadows of anxiety, toward the man who was called a friend of God. Her journey will take her through Kierkegaard's indirect authorship into his more direct authorship, and thus from anxiety to faith. Kierkegaard began his journey in the shadows of Moriah, where he gazed upon Abraham in fear and trembling. Years later, recollecting the anxiety that assailed him at this stage, he came to a conclusion about the individual who approaches Abraham in fear and trembling: "This is a sign that he is being educated or brought up to faith" (Kierkegaard 1978a, entry 1401).

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